

INDIAN

Stories №9



Featuring
"TRAIL of the
LONELY GUN"



INDIANS No. 9

TRAIL OF THE LONELY GUN

by Les Savage Jr.

MEN IN BUCKSKIN

by Brett Austin



*All characters are entirely fictitious and no reference
is intended to any person living or dead.*

Vickers had never seen Sherry Kari. But he wanted her. So he followed her danger trail—into an Apache village that promised a horror death to any paleface who dared enter. He defied redskin wrath, schemed and fought to save her—knowing that if he did she would swear him to the gallows.

TRAIL OF THE LONELY GUN

By Les Savage, Jr.

WHEN THE sound came, Johnny Vickers suffered, and the look on his stoic-eyes Harry smiled subtly to the girl. Moonlight coming to the doorway of the man's shack fell strangely across his face, his upper half obliterated by the solid black shadow laid across it beneath the brim of his flat-topped hat, his feet unseen for thrusting forward in a habitual aggression that gave his legs vain under the swirling circumstance of his need. The color of his alkali-whitened denim coat was turned up around the unbuttoned collar of his neck, and his legs were long and middle-drawn in sweat-soiled. The leggings with greasy fringe down their seams. Across the girth of Corrado Creek and on down Tamarac Butte Road, he could see Papago's skin glowing yellow in the dark blackness of Arizona's August night.

"Kari!" he said.

"No, Vickers," the man outside answered "Perry Papago. I'll come in, if."

The half-breed's figure leaped light from the square darkness of the door momentarily; then he was inside, bending forward slightly as if to put it Johnny Vickers. In the shadows, Papago's peck-marked face was barely visible to Vickers. He had on nothing but a pair of dirty chaps and a short leather vest, and his shoulders were smooth and coppery against the dim glow from outside. Vickers marked the three pounds of Harrington .44 ball in Papago's holster before he spoke.

"You took a chance waiting in the dark."

"I didn't know it was so bad," said

Papago, and his eyes were taking in the word rapidity of Vickers' figure. "But I guess I'd be pretty spooky, too, if I'd been hiding out on a winter range for over a month. They don't give you much peace, do they, Vickers?" I hear Deputy Calaveras shoot and you last week up in Goshute's."

"Never mind," said Vickers.

"Why did you kill Edger James, really, Vickers?" said Papago. "He was such a nice young man. Just because you and him were rival editors—"

"He was a smiling rascal who thought he could find out everything that went on in Arizona Territory by sitting on his back in front of that two-bit Courier and—" Johnny Vickers stopped, breathing hard, trembling with the effort of holding all the bitterness of his last month in him. Finally he spoke between his teeth. "I told you never mind."

"But I will mind," said Perry Papago. "I always liked you, Vickers. If there's one square man with the Indians in Phoenix, you're it. Your editorials stopped with them one Indian was from starting. The Moguls at Walpi won't be quick to forget how that Christian article you wrote kept them from starting in 'unsavory' war." His voice had lost its former meekness. "We don't blame you for killing James. He looked every decent thing you tried to do for the Indians. That's why I'm here, Vickers. Any other man, we wouldn't care, but you always played square with us, and we don't want you to go in any bigger than you already did. We don't want you to do that."



"Hold still, so I can see your face when I blow your brains out!"

with the blow, Vickers stumbled backward and slipped on a body slung going down. He caught the white head of Judge Kern at his feet, and finding it too weak, slid holding Papago's gun-hand with one fist, he caught Papago by the belt with his other, securing the man around. Cornsack must have pistol-whipped Kern down, for he was just straightening above the judge and his gun was rising towards Vickers. Swung off-balance, Papago stumbled into Cornsack that way. Cornsack grunted, and the whole shock refired so he was knocked back against the wall.

Vickers still had hold of Papago by the belt and gun. Papago grayed with the effort of swinging Vickers in the face again with his free hand. His pecked away from his whole berth in afraid rage. Vickers took that blow, and sat himself and heaved re-vengeing both his hands on the man.

Cornsack was just coming promptly away from the wall, trying to line up his druggon again. Papago staggered back into him. They both crashed into the wall and fell to the floor in a tangle of legs and arms. Papago pulled free of Cornsack, crouched, and tried to run. Vickers was already jumping for him, feet first. One moccasin caught Papago in the leg, knocking his head back against the wall, and again the frame slumped slumped and did slumped from the wall. Vickers other foot caught Papago's gun-hand, knocking the Remington free. Shouting with pain, Papago tried to rise, but Vickers caught him again in the face with a moccasin. More dart whistled down on them and Vickers whirled to catch Cornsack before the man could rise. The Indian had dropped his cap-and-ball when Papago fell back against him, and Vickers paled him up by his long gray hair and mumbled his head against the wall with it.

"Tish-quish!" shouted Cornsack, and his hoarse voice was drowned by the rocking shudder of the building, and then a leader note. Vickers released the man's hair and jumped backward with earth rattling on to his shoulders.

Just living to rise from the wall,

shaking his head dazedly, Papago was caught in the development of red and shiners as the roof caved in. Vickers saw a rotten beam collapse one broken end crashing into Cornsack. Cornsack threw himself forward with his eyes shut and his face contorted in fear. Then both men disappeared in the avalanches of broken earth.

Vickers bent to catch Judge Kern under the arched and hand him out through the door; then he stopped realizing the rattling thunder had ceased. Only the far end of the shock had moved in. Kern began groaning and shaking his head dully.

"Dropped Indian gun me the barrel of that cap-and-ball!"

"Think we ought to pull them out?" said Vickers.

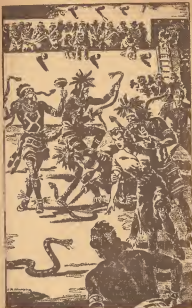
Kern rose unsteadily to his feet, staring at the pile of earth and shiners at the door end of the room, then glanced at Vickers, and his eyes began to tremble, and he swallowed. "I guess we better, Vickers. The war mounds don't deserve it, but I might lose a night's sleep if I had it on my conscience, and Papago ain't worth a night's sleep to me."

Cornsack's arm was sticking out of the dirt, and he was still conscious when they pulled him free, choking and gasping. Papago took longer to reach, and revive. Even after he came around, he lay there where they had dropped him outside, breathing faintly, staring up at them with his enormous eyes. Slowly, those eyes took on a smoldering opedly, and when he finally rose to his feet, his breathing had become gruff and rasping. Vickers pushed the shells from his Remington and handed it back.

Papago glanced at the gun, slipped it back in his holster, and his voice trembled slightly with his effort at control. "You're going after Sherry Kern?"

"What do you think?" said Vickers.

"You're going after Sherry Kern." It was a statement this time. Papago turned toward his horse, hitched to some manure at the side and Cornsack followed him, repeating the much-heard dunt beside Papago.



One of the diamondsacks slithered directly toward Sherry.

you said. Pappago lifted a big tin and then, with his foot in the stirrup, and one hand gripping his saddlehorn, he turned to look at Vickers again, and there was an indefinite smugness in his flat, tawny face. "You're a fool, Vickers. You think you had a lot of men looking for you this last month? It wasn't much. It wasn't nothing compared to what you're looking for you do this. Vickers didn't have to wear out any woman for your arrest. You're dead of your own. And it ain't just for your crime, Vickers. It's your death warrant!"

CHAPTER TWO

UP IN the Territory the best stock like this in August, about an hour after sunrise, and there was no breeze to dry the beaded sweat on the heavy little men standing there in the shade where bleeding heat by observation assailed the black lava.

Vickers had rolled himself a cigarette and hunched down with his back against a boulder so he could see both upstage and down, his theory in his lap. Three days of riding were behind him from Prescott, and he had unmaned the weary horse completely to rest it. His pale blue eyes took on a criminal color in his half-dark face, moving deliberately across the stage before him, and his long black hair hung in a sweat-damp cascade down his neck, twisted. He gave no sign when the rider came into view. He sat motionless, waiting for the man to rise through the scrubby yuccas down there.

When the rider would have passed him, going on up, Vickers stood without speaking and waited. The man's head turned slowly, then he looked at the horse around and dropped into the shallow rut Vickers occupied. He stepped the horse and leaned forward in the centrifuge ring to peer side-eyed at Vickers. He was a short, square building of a man with heavy jaws and a mop of reddish hair that grew straight down the middle of his head and reached at his temples about ears like a pair of small pink cauliflower.

"Vickers?" he said. He got down off the horse with a springy ease for his compact bulk, fisting a cigar from inside his short-skirted black coat "Webb Fallon. The Apache told me you'd be hereabouts this morning. You ran into Kern's camp now?"

Vickers took a last puff on his cigarette, studying the cold redness of Fallon's speech, brown eyes then dropped the cigar and ground it out with a scuffed wooden heel. "Kern said you'd picked up a few things on Sherry."

The name sent something indefinable through Fallon's face, and he didn't speak at once. "I'm glad you're in it," he said finally. "The judge told me he'd try and get you as a last resort. I have found one or two things." He got a leather whang from his pocket. It was worn and greasy, about four inches long. "This for instance."

"Looks like the fringe of someone's legging."

"That's right," said Fallon, and let his eyes drop to Vickers' legging. "Sherry Kern had a handful of them. They came off the legging of the man who murdered Edgar James."

For a moment their faces looked, and Vickers could feel the blue smoldering trench right about his thin mouth, drew the skin across his high cheekbones till it gleamed. Nothing but pure indignation, Fallon went on.

"It was one of the pieces of evidence Judge Kern was going to use against you at the trial Edgar James must have been close enough to tip it off the murderer's pants. Sherry was the first one to reach Edgar there on Coronado before he died, and he still had that bunch of fringe to his hand. Sherry had kept it to his possession, and when this turned up, it had some significance for me. As you know, I've been Kern's agent down here since 1905, trying to answer the Tucson Machine. One of the Mexicans I've befriended came into Tucson Sunday before last, and a bunch of Apaches with a woman had stopped at his place for food and rest. They turned him

head and took what horses he had, but he managed to escape into the timber. I went back to his place with him. Found this by the way."

"You think she's trying to leave a trail?" said Vickers.

"It's like her," said Fallon, and that same restless expression crossed his face as when Vickers had said her name before, stronger this time. For a moment Fallon seemed to be looking beyond Vickers. Then, with a vulgar effect, he brought his eyes back to the man. "You never knew Sherry, did you?"

"Never saw her," said Vickers. "She striped at Prescott from Austin the night Edgar James was killed."

"You put it nicely."

"Never mind."

"You can admit it to me," said Fallon. "I'm strictly neutral."

Vickers' voice grew thin. "I said never mind."

Fallon's voice held a faint sting. "All right. So you didn't murder Edgar James. And Sherry Kern came in the night he was killed, and you haven't ever seen her."

"We look anything like the judge?" asked Vickers, feeling the antipathy that had dropped between them.

"The judge," said Fallon, and again he was looking beyond Vickers, and that same thing was in his face. Vickers could almost read it now, but could not yet believe it, somehow, in a man like Fallon. "Yes, the judge."

Fallon jerked out of it abruptly, waving his head in a frustration at having let Vickers see it.

"Black-haired, black-eyed," he said matter-of-factly. "Three-six or seven. Big and yes, quite a bit like the judge."

He seemed to smile as he hadn't used his sign and bit at the end almost angrily, spitting it out. Then he waved the leather whang.

"Thank this will do us any good?"

"If she's leaving these for a trail," said Vickers. "It might do us a lot of good."

"Glad you think so," said Fallon. "This was just a lucky strike and it's left me up against the fence. I don't have your touch with the Indians. The place closed to me."

"We'll have to do a sight of riding," said Vickers.

"I imagine," said Fallon.

The Painted Desert extended three hundred miles along the north bank of the Little Colorado, a sprawl of heat and light and dust changing the haze constantly, a scarlet haze that splashed the horizon shifting unaccountably into a scarlet mist of purples and grays from which warmly lit red roses erupted and knots of reddish sandstone thrust toward the sky. Dust-swept and glowing eerily in the shadows of gliding horses, the two men rose from the brackish water of the river toward Shoji Station, standing forlorn and lonely against the wind-swept sky. All afternoon now Vickers had been scanning the ground, and finally he found what he had been seeking. He halted his horse, dismounted to study the mound of black rocks, topped by a flat piece of sandstone upon which were placed a number of wooden ovals, painted white and buffed with leather.

Fallon removed the leather sign from his mouth. "What is it?"

"Bride stone," muttered Vickers. "The ovals represent eggs. Probably made them during the Winter Solstice Ceremony as proof for an increase in the eagle. Months before the eagle in the back corner of my room to the sun-bringing gods. We should find some boys trapping eagles near here for their annual rain dance."

"You really know, don't you?" said Fallon.

Vickers got up on his pious haunch. "Where do you think I've been riding this last month?"

Fallon raised his animal after Vickers, talking in the saddle. "Get a funny feeling. But get it out here!"

"You mean about being followed?"

Fallon turned sharply toward him. "Then it ain't just a feeling."

"There was dust on the rim this morning."

"You even got men like an Indian," grinned Fallon. "Who do you figure? Apaches?"

"We haven't made a move the In-

(You don't know about," said Vickers. "It might be then.")

"Or someone else?"

"You should know about that," said Vickers.

"How do you mean?" asked the man.

"About the kidnapping of Sherry Kern by the Indians some a mile or two farther, when the Tucson Machine would give anything to keep the animal from being moved back to Phoenix," asked Vickers.

"It does. But why should I know?" Suddenly it seemed to strike Fallon, and his face darkened. "I don't like your suggestion, Vickers. I've been waiting for Judge Kern for a long time."

"And you told him it wasn't the Tucson Machine that kidnapped Sherry?"

Fallon nodded his head in the dark violently, passing it over Vickers' horse so hard the man started, grabbed Vickers by the shoulder to pull him around and catch at the front of his Levi jacket. There was a driving strength in Fallon's fist that held Vickers there momentarily, and the man's wide eyes stared into Vickers'.

"Listen, Vickers. I want to get one thing straight. I will thank you're a murderer, and I don't want you any more than you trust me but I'm not going to have you insinuating I have any connection with the Tucson Machine. Nobody knows who runs the Machine any more than they know who the Magallon Kid is—"

It was Vickers who stopped Fallon. He saw the man's hand of his Levi jacket and shoved it down toward their waists. Fallon gave no jerk, trying to free it, and then stopped, held there more by Vickers' blinding eyes than his grip.

"And I'm afraid of being called a murderer," Fallon," said Vickers, through his teeth, "and if you still want to do it, you'd better go for your gun!"

The Magallon built their eyes upon of willow shoots and deciduous, barking them with rabbits and cooing themselves inside, waiting to

seize the snags that pointed on the grey, and Vickers and Fallon came across a trap on a flat atop Hog's Back. Another man might have been silent or touchy after a clash like the one Vickers and Fallon had experienced, but Kern's agent sat impassively on his mare watching the Indian youth emerge from the trap, no expression in his wide eyes.

The Magallon boy was lean and drawn as a gaunt being, his black hair set straight across his brow and hanging to his shoulders behind, wearing no more than a buckskin loin cloth and a pair of dirty, beaded moccasins.

"Goshes dia, Goshes Vickers," he said.

"Goshes dia, Goshes," said Vickers, speaking in Spanish. "You have grown since I last saw you at Echo-mo!"

Quinta nodded his head in a pleased way without allowing much movement to appear on his face. "You are training birds too?" he asked in Spanish.

"One bird," said Vickers. "A female bird with a black head!"

"That is a rare bird," Quinta told him. "Even more rare if she steals her plumage in August."

"There was a Hopi down on the Little Colorado who said one of the such trappers up here found a feather of that plumage," said Vickers.

Gravely the boy untied a leather whang from his G string, handing it to Vickers. "You know I would show it to no other white man."

Vickers passed it to Fallon, and the man compared it with the other whang he had gotten, nodding. "Goshes' mias it. So Apaches dye their hair like that. First bunch of the trapper I've seen in the Territory in years." He pinned at Vickers' belt. "Goshes' mias it."

Vickers drew a thin breath, looking at the boy to stay on the Indian. "How did the bird fly?"

"Probably," they must have been riding for days when they passed south of Hog's Back, but she still sat straight in the saddle without any fear in her face. Her hair was black as midnight and long and straight

like an Indian maiden. I saw that dead man here and went down to find out what it was. They didn't see me. There must have been a dead Apache—" like the Indian. He had entered the horse's voice—"and the bird you seek rode behind the leader. He must have fought them, for there were scratches on her face, and her hands were tied, but they had not subdued her."

"Nothing more," said Fallon, and his eyes had that far-away look again, and this time Vickers realized what it was. He had not been able to believe it before. In Fallon's face, the same thing was in Quinta's face, now, and Quinta's description had made the picture of Sherry Kern more vivid in Vickers' mind; that picture had been forming a long time now, ever since he left Prescott, part of it gleaned from the papers or matches he found on the way to his meeting with Fallon, some from Fallon himself, now from Quinta. Vickers could almost see her now, riding proud and unsaddled in her cap, her eyes gleaming fiercely, her stiletto body straight and unyielding after a ride that would have exhausted another white woman to the point of collapse. And something else was beginning to form in his mind, or in some other part of him he couldn't name, and it gave him a better comprehension of her capacity to stir other men, or more than stir them. He turned in his saddle to glance at Judge Kern's agent. Yes, even a man like Fallon, Kern a cold, suspicious man, like Wells Fallon.

Then Vickers turned back to Quinta. "Do you know where they have taken her?"

Quinta shook his head. "The angels have some eyes from the Hopi does not know of. There is a horse woman near Cerro Gordo who knows where the birds sleep when the moon rises. I have sought many angles on his advice."

"Perhaps we had better go there," said Vickers.

"Perhaps you had better not," said a hoarse voice from behind them. "Perhaps you had better stay right

there so I can see what you look like when I hear your horse out."

The wind whistled across the desert like wind against the sand which had broken out on Vickers' horse. His first instinct had been to pull his horse up from where he held it across his saddle horns. He had stopped his head from moving with an effort. Finally his eye strayed beneath him as he turned.

Vickers wouldn't have believed a white man could come up on them like that without giving himself away. This one had. He sat on a size of the saddle's uplift behind them, a huge grunting man with a heavy black beard and a shaggy mane of hair on his back, head a ponderous Harper's Perry percussion pistol in each frocked hand.

"Well, Red-eye," said Fallon, "you called whiskey to the Magallon now."

"I said it to any man which buys," said Red-eye Kerres. He had on a pair of moccasins and his heavy leggings of buckskin were pulled on over long and dammed which suffered for his short, the sleeves rolled up to the elbows of his hairy forearms. He waved a fat Harper's Perry at Vickers. "The Tucson Machine has a piece of my hand-drawn dolls on your head. What would you give me now to collect that piece?"

It called Vickers to bargain for his life that way, but there was nothing else, with those huge persuasions in his face. "How much do you want?"

"I don't say how much. I said what."

"Well," "You're travelling this country looking Sherry Kern," said Red-eye. "You'll hit a lot of Indian women, Magallon, Apache, Mogai, I got a lot of red-eye that would bring fifty dollars the quest from them women. I never been able to reach them before. You're the only one could take me into Tucson and home me back on again with my scalp still above my beard."

"And after they get through availing your scalp they'll have a war dance and pull a massacre song—where while they're drunk," said Vickers. "The only reason I could take you into Tucson is the Tucson

are my friends. You think I'd do that to them?"

Red-eye Reeves waved the Harper's Ferry again. "This is your alma-mater, and its sort of a jumpy one, so you'd better decide right quick."

Vickers took a heavy breath, speaking finally. "We're heading for a Navajo shaman in Canon Diablo."

"Sounds me," said Red-eye Reeves. "He'll be good for a fallon, at least."

They rode westward from Hopi Butte, Red-eye Reeves leading a sulky little Mexican packhorse and leaving a dozen others, spangely piled high with old wooden kips of whisky. All day Reeves kept puffing at a bottle, and it was evident he had been doing the same before he came on Vickers and Fallon. He reeled tipily at his saddle, muttering through his beard sometimes. They were riding through a scrubby waste of juniper, some of Canon Diablo when Vickers drew far enough ahead for Fallon to speak without being overheard.

"You aren't coming through with this?"

"I'll get rid of him as soon as I can," said Vickers.

"Be careful," Fallon told him. "His drunk rant of the three, but he's dangerous. I don't think his real purpose is wanting to come with us to the whiskey."

Vickers glanced at Fallon, pale eyes asking. "Is he from Tucson?"

"He's been there," said Fallon.

It was a short, stout, cutting old man Vickers had started to say his room shed and spoked, starting to back and spiral, and Vickers drove himself from the horse while he still had enough control over his falling horse and come up running, the back of his left coat ripped where he had gone through some jumping cholla. "Come back here, you cross-eyed cretin to a snap-toiled varmint," yelled Red-eye Reeves from somewhere behind Vickers, and Vickers saw a male gallop away with wooden legs spilling in its wake from the drunken spangely pack.

That it was out of control for Vickers, and he had thrown himself the ground near the edge of the grove. He lay there in the handy fragments

of the wilderness, peering toward the mess ahead of them. The slope was steep at first, littered with boulders and scrubby timber, then steepened to a veritable cliff, channelled by erosion. Vickers jumped at the movement behind him.

"Steady mind," said Fallon, and he crawled on it with an old Thomas construction-model coil. "It looks like we won't have to worry about getting rid of Red-eye. He's taking care of that himself."

Still yelling, Reeves had chased his scowling pack team out into the open beyond them, kicking his scowling after a brief of pack animals that had headed up the slope. He was well on to the rising ground when the shot rang off. The riding male stumbled, and Reeves went over his head, landing on both feet and running on up the slope with his momentum, and both Harper's Ferry guns were in his hands before he stopped.

"Come on out then, you muck-in-the-brother to a spotted mummy and a chinless idiot. Nobody can treat my babies like that. Nobody can shoot me!"

His own shot cut him off, and Vickers couldn't help exclaiming, because he hadn't seen anybody up there, and he wouldn't have believed a man could do that with an old percussion pistol.

"I told you he was dangerous," Fallon muttered.

Either way a man had run out of the rocks where he must have been crouched. Both his hands were at his chest, and he stood there a moment as if suspended. Then he fell forward, rather six over the saddle-stone and coming to a stop against some stunted juniper. Squeaking hoarse obscenities, Red-eye Reeves charged on up the slope. There was something terrible about his rant, thick-lipped, aware running noticeably on spindly like this, and somehow Vickers wasn't surprised to see a man run farther on up and then to fall. Red-eye had raised his other Harper's Ferry when the third figure appeared, much smaller, clambering to a rock and holding both hands up, palms toward Reeves. The drunk

whisky dresser shifted his head with a jerk till it bore on that third man. Fallon must have realized it about the same time Vickers did, because he jumped out at the man's head, shouting:

"Steady, damn it, can't you see he—"

Vickers shot downward his voice. The pistol leaped from Reeves' hand, and he pulled it again, taking a stumbling step forward and pulling the hand in toward him. Fallon turned back to Vickers, his mouth open slightly, and Vickers realized it would take a lot for Fallon to show that much surprise.

Reeves was holding out his bloody, shattered hand when they reached him, studying it with a speculative look to his pained mouth, and he looked up and grinned at them. "I didn't think those old Henry's could go that far," he said.

Vickers looked for ghosts in his face, unwilling to believe the man held no more of him for shooting the gun from his hand, but could find none. "Didn't you see that man wanted to surrender?"

"What do I care," said Red-eye, going to pick up his gun and studying it in his belt. "The only good figure's a dead one to me, and I don't care how my lead catches there, with their hands up, or wrapped around a gun."

Fallon looked at Vickers, then shrugged. "You go and get him, I'll see what we can do for Red-eye's hand."

"The hell with that," growled Red-eye, wiping his bloody hand against his shirt the way a man would do if he had an antiseptic. "Think me those damn Henry's bullets can do any more's pack a man? It takes one of those babies—" he patted his pistol—"and you'll see what I mean when you find that varmint I pegged higher up. I'm going to get a drink."

He walked off toward a group of his men where they had finally stopped up on the slope. The Indian who had surrendered was making his way down to them, a gaunt ancient in tattered deerskin covered with dirt and other filth, but his strength preceded him a good dozen yards. His watery eyes took some time to

focus on them, from the seamed age of his face, and then he held up a pained claw of a hand, and the single word released them to that station, holding neither contempt nor respect.

"Potatoes," he said. "White soap."

Vickers realized this must be the shaman Quain had spoken of. "There was a youth of the Hopi-shaman named Quain in the eagle-carrying grounds of Hopi Station who told us of a wanderer at Canon Diablo who was in communication with the Trees," said Vickers.

The Trees were the gods of the Pueblo, and though nothing showed in the shaman's face, there was a subtle change to the tone of his voice. "You must be blessed by the Trees, Quain would not have sent white men to see otherwise. I shall then thank you for sending me from the two Apostles who were belated men."

He waved his hand toward the Indian Red-eye had shot. The second one had disappeared over the lip of the mesa, and as Vickers moved up to examine the dead man, Reeves came in leading his pack animals. The dead had taken the Indian through the shoot, apparently killing him instantly. He had on a pair of Apache war moccasins of buckskin, really boots that were hip length, turned down until they were only knee high, forming a protection of double thickness against the malignant touch of the southwest. About his neck he wore a G string and a buckskin bag of powder and shot for his Sharps bullet gun. Squinting over his hip, Vickers saw the sad expression which at Reeves' face.

"Know him?" said Vickers.

Reeves nodded, his drunken humor suddenly gone. "That's Beloso. He rode with the Mexican Kid."

CHAPTER THREE

THE shaman's "happens" was up on the mesa, overlooking Canon Diablo which formed the other side, a deep chasm of Katash sandstone, yellow at the top and fading into a stained color at its descended. Vickers had borrowed one of Reeves' mules to

wound up his speckled robe, and he disappeared from the skiffish house near, knocking the stick to blow the wind.

"What were those Apaches doing here?" he asked the Navajo.

"Hiding me, perhaps," said the shaman calmly.

"He'll never tell you anything unless you get him inside that hog-wild," said Nekeya, "and you know they won't let a white man in their medicine house."

Vickers held out his hand as the deer showed across his palm. "I am blood brother to Abello, the House Child of Welpi."

"You must be the one who saved him from the pahutans near Tucson last year," said the shaman emphatically.

Vickers shrugged, seeing it had done no good, as Abello was a Mogai, and this man a Navajo. "The white man blamed him for something Apaches did."

Nekeya put his good hand on the hair of a Harper's Pony. "We ain't getting nowhere this way. Look, you dried-up old—"

"Never mind, Nekeya," Vickers hadn't said it very loud, but it stopped the man. Then Vickers moved closer to the shaman, speaking softly. "I know it. Shu-pa-pa."

It was the first expression the shaman had allowed to enter his face, and it caught, briefly at his mouth and eyes before he suppressed it. Not, or reverence, or fear, Vickers could not tell which. Then, without speaking, he turned and stooped through the low door of the "hog-wild," a central hall of willow whips and skins, beaten and weathered by the winds of many years on top of the mesa. As Vickers bent to follow, Nekeya caught his arm.

"What was that you told him?"

"Shu-pa-pa," Vickers murmured. "The Black Lake of Tsuru, from whence the human race is supposed to have arisen. It's so named the Indians merely say it aloud."

"And no white man is supposed to know about it?"

"I never met another who did," said Vickers. "At least the shaman knows

I've been inside their hog-wilds before. That's all we care about."

The inside was cold and oppressive with the same odor the shaman mentioned, and Vickers stood away from a half-dim light dancing above the door, dressed and bound and feathered to represent one of the gods. The shaman indicated that they should seat themselves about the flat white pel basket woven from marlytina that rested in the center of the "hog-wild." Then the medicine man coiled himself and stirred the coals of the fire before the empty basket and they cowered, lighting a wood be produced from a baskin-bag at his belt. This sacred cigarette he passed around, and while each of them puffed on it, began murmuring incantations over the dying light of the coals. It was almost pitch black inside the hut when the baskin-bag was opened, and Vickers couldn't have sworn how it got there. The shaman commenced muttering, three feet away from the basket, but Nekeya drew in a hissing breath, reaching toward the place of wasteful light resting in the bottom of the flat basket. Vickers caught his hand, pulling it back.

"Gosh, had an object here," said Vickers. "A feather, he said, dropped from a black-headed bird who shed her plumage in August."

"A goddess, rather," murmured the shaman, and Vickers could feel something drive him up, become he sensed it coming again, and his breathing became stilled, and stiller. "No goddess sent by the Tsuru to prove to the Apaches what cypreses they are. Nothing they had done could subdue her. Their leader himself wished her down, but she bit his hand when he tried to touch her. Even the dead and sun a victim of the same evil could not take her beauty. Her eyes were set as black as her hair, and once when she turned fully to me, it was as if I had stared into the swimming smoke of a campfire, and another time, when she looked at the leader of the Apaches, it was as if I had seen lightning. Other of the Gods, like Quana, have seen her, and so long as the world

was so soaked in the hog-wild, it will be told how the goddess rode through our land, leaving signs to the future gods."

From the corner of his eye, Vickers could see Nekeya bending forward that same way, his mouth parted slightly, his wide eyes open. Suddenly he seemed to feel Vickers' gaze on him, and closed his mouth, leaning back, gazing almost eagerly toward Vickers.

"How did you get the sign?" said Vickers, reaching toward the baskin-bag in the basket.

The Apaches were apparently expecting to find water in the Red Lake, but it has been dry a month, and there was none. They would not have revealed their passing to me unless they were desperate for water. They forced me to show my secret sink on the mesa, where the sun cannot reach the water which the Rain Gods have brought and dry it up. When they left the one named Belano and his companion to guard me and keep me from telling of them until they were safely away."

Nekeya's eyes were on Vickers now, in a covert speculation, as he spoke. "The Mogollon Kid?"

The shaman sat starting into the basket without answering Nekeya. The fire had died completely now, and the light from the smoke-hole was rapidly fading as night fell outside, terrifying the hog-wild into their darkness. Vickers could hardly see Nekeya's face across the basket. He saw the man glaze at him now, and there was that same speculation as Vickers had seen in Nekeya's face. Vickers felt his hands tighten around the Hogry across his knees. In a few moments it would be as impossible dark that none of them could see the other.

"The shaman learned none but the Tsuru," said Vickers, and his body was stiller for the shift.

The shaman's voice came sharply from the gloom, almost angrily. "How do I know if it was the Mogollon Kid?"

"I have heard the Indians feared the Mogollon Kid as much as their own gods," said Vickers. "He must have the power of the Trees if he can

shoot a shaman's mouth." Even that failed to elicit anything from the shaman. "If you can't tell us who it was," said Vickers, "perhaps you can tell us where they are bound."

Vickers had seen the incredible ingenuity of these wonder workers. Once he had seen a shaman make corn grow in the bare dirt floor of a hog-wild, and it had convinced and amazed even his incredulous realism. But this was so unexpectedly that it held him spellbound as it occurred. A faint light glow descended from the smoke-hole of the low-life structure, until their feet began were bathed in an eerie light, faces drawn and bent with a sudden tension. The place of baskin-bag was revealed momentarily in the basket, shifting like a small smoke with a life of its own and it pointed due north. Then the light was extinguished abruptly. In the following darkness Vickers recovered from the night fright, to do what he had planned. Still sitting in the cross-legged position they had all assumed, he placed his hands on either side of him and shifted himself about twelve inches to the right with his legs yet crossed, speaking as he did to hide the sound.

"The sacred sign points to Tucson."

"Yes," said the shaman. "The Dance of the Snake is being held at Welpi this year—"

The shot thundered, rocking the "hog-wild," deafening Vickers. He sat rigid with his back pressed the willow frame of the hut, his Honey cocked against his jaw, waiting for whoever came for him. There was a shock, a snuffed struggle in the outer darkness, then the hog-wild shook violently. Outside, the animals had been spoken by the shot, whinnying and neighing and starting the ground as they tore at their padded paws and galloped back and forth before the door. Vickers knew what a trumpet anybody would be going off the door, and he sat there in silent awe, his hands again. Finally the speak came a third and third again across the hut. He jerked his Honey that way. It was the shaman, throwing fresh jumper shavings on the dead

crane. He lit the fire and shuffled across the room to where Vickers had risen. There was no one else in the barracks.

The shaman dropped the bullet hole in the hide wall. "It would have killed you if you'd been sitting one pace to the left," he muttered. "I wonder why they wanted you dead?"

Vickers turned toward the door. "I don't wonder why, so much, as which one."

CHAPTER FOUR

POM estimates the women in north-eastern Arizona Territory had been known as the province of Tanager, and the Peshito being there as Mouda, or Hapa, from their own name for themselves. Hopkinton-Walpi was one of these people, perched atop a mountain crest, a great block of sandstone reaching up from the badlands about it. The Indian word houses on its top barely visible from below. It was August of the second year, and groups of Indians from the other pueblos and from the Navajo camps to the east had been pushing up the trail to Walpi all day, raising nervous flurries of grey dust over the fields of corn and squash near the village.

Knowing it would be useless to go on the door of the shaman's Hogan back there above Canon Diablo. If anyone was outside, Vickers had suspected some of the deadshots at the back, crawling out that way, only to find that both Red-eye Hesse and Walpi Pasha were gone, with all the animals, including his span. He had trailed them on foot, but being mounted they seem outdistanced him. He could read signs of someone following Red-eye's tracks on the roof, but could find no other horse prints, and concluded Pasha had not left the barracks with Red-eye.

A week after Canon Diablo, Vickers gladdened up the trail toward Walpi, behind a party of Apaches on very little sustenance. Ordinarily the Apaches and Navajos were enemies of the Peshito, but during the Snake dance hostilities were suspended, and either group showed to view the ceremonies. The horses atop the mesa were half

three stories high, each story as tall as the height of one room on the roof of the lower level, forming three huge steps, with rocky ledges reaching each roof from the one below. What passed for the streets and courtyards in front of the houses were filled with a milling crowd of Indians, Moqui women in hand-woven mantles holding dirty brown babies to their breasts, tall arrogant Navajo men with their heavy silver belts and turquoise brocade, a few shifty Apaches like strange dogs, standing apart in their little groups and hissing whoever they were approached, turkey red bandanas at their arched black hair, Sharps strapped close, slapping over the chimneys in the week long from the trail.

Vickers was aware of their suspicious eyes on him, and an irritable sensation of something not quite right filled him. Then a Navajo stumbled through the crowd toward Vickers, pivoting at a big bow in his silver belt, and Vickers knew that it was "Pahana," growled the Navajo, shouting a Moqui woman roughly aside and Vickers could see how bloodshot his eyes were. A pair of Moqui braves moved in from where they had been standing beneath an arched wall, and Red-eye was drunk too. As Vickers opened the lever on his Henry, he saw the Mexican calmly standing in a powder courtyard, his apache peak tipped off and laying at the woman's feet, empty bags across all about the hard packed ground. "Pahana!" "Pahana!" It was a shout, not, coming from a nervous Apache, running in from the other side. Vickers had waited till the last moment, but just as he was about to bring his Henry up to cover them, someone else appeared from the rooftop of a nearby building.

"So, not Pahana! Hopki-shin-shin. He is my blood brother!" It was Abeto, House Chief of Walpi, swinging up to the rim of the wrinkle-brained ledges and clanking down with a crack, unlike agile. He was a small compact man in white darsen for the coming evening, a band of red Darsen silk

about his black bobbed hair. The Moqui stopped outside of Vickers, and the Navajo moved gradually aside, still clanking his belt, to let the House Chief through. Vickers embraced Abeto unconsciously, as behind a blood brother, but he saw it in the House Chief's eyes as Abeto pulled him through the milling crowd toward his own dwelling.

"Here's a here!" he said to Abeto. "Why did you let him sell their whisky to your people, brother? You could have stopped it."

"He didn't sell it," said the House Chief, pulling him urgently toward the ladder.

"But he must have," said Vickers, trying to understand the extreme darkness of Abeto's eyes. "The Moqui never took things without paying. They are not Apaches. What's happening here, Abeto? You're still House Chief, aren't you?"

"Yes, you," said the Moqui. "We can't talk here, brother."

Abeto glanced nervously at a bunch of Apaches standing near the ladder. One of them with a Colt stuck asked through a cartridge belt about his man inside had a keg of whisky. They were watching Vickers, shifting back and forth restlessly, talking in stolen tones, and Vickers caught the name as he reached for the ladder, and stopped.

"Is that it?" he asked Abeto.

"Please, don't stop out here. Is that it?"

"You heard what they said."

"Brother, for your own good—"

"Are you afraid of him, too?" Vickers asked. "There was a death at Hapa Rating too afraid even to speak his name, and a shaman at Canon Diablo. If the shamans are afraid of him—"

"I am House Chief of Walpi," said Abeto drawing himself up, "head of the Bear Clan. Never did I expect to hear such an insult from my blood brother."

"Then is that it?"

Abeto hesitated, glancing about

him, face dark. "The Mountain King" he said finally.

Vickers clatched at his coat. "Is he here? The King. Who is he, Abeto?"

"I did not say he was here," said the Moqui, grabbing Vickers' elbow. "Foolish, if you raise your life, and up that ladder into my house. We can't talk out here. Only their respect for my position holds them now. They have known of your coming for days. I sent a runner out to warn you back, but he must have missed you. Please—"

The spruce ladder popped and creaked beneath Vickers' weight. On the first terrace an eagle was fluttering in an arched sign, one of the birds bugged at Moqui Darts and brought him for the rain ceremonies, to be killed after the last Kachinas come in July, the Indians believing the eagle's spirit would carry prayers for rain to the Great Above. Abeto moved aside the heavy beaded blanket hanging over the doorway leading into the rooms on the second level, allowing Vickers to go in. A square was squatting on the floor beside before the looking stone the Moqui called a looma, sitting like a cornucopia with white to form a then before for pishams. Vickers spoke their language to some extent, but when she looked up and saw him, she said something so fast he couldn't catch it.

"He is my blood-brother," the House Chief told her. She said something else, rising from the looma. Abeto took an angry breath and continued toward the door. "Out out," he told her. "Get out."

When she was gone he turned to Vickers. "You see how it is? You can't stay here. I am visiting all the laws of hospitality now, but it is for your own good, brother. For weeks we have heard of your death for the black-haired woman. I knew you, and I knew again or later you would arrive here. She is not here, believe me."

"Then who is it?" said Vickers. "What's happening? Why have you so

little control over your people? Surely it was not you who that they took Keweenaw first-order. You know what will happen with everyone drunk like this. You have a hard enough time maintaining peace among your people and the Navajos and Apaches as it is. Why were they talking of the Mogkion Kid? Where is he?"

A man shoved aside the heavy blanket in the doorway, stepping inside. "Here he is," he said.

Vickers had lived and travelled among the Indians long enough to acquire some facility at hiding his emotions when it was necessary, but he felt his mouth open slightly as he stared past Abeto's white blanket shoulder at the man swarming there in the doorway, one hand holding aside the curtain to reveal the Apache behind him, the other hand hooked in his heavy cartridge belt near enough to the big like Remington 44 he packed like a man, serious face was scarred deeply from smallpox, and the whites of his eyes were pale shining against the sun, middle intelligence of his head, stolid mouth.

"Ferry Papago," said Vickers simply.

Papago grinned without much mirth, moving on in, and Combs followed him on either side, just, shuffling black eyes travelling to meet Vickers' gaze, and the other Apaches blotted out the light from the door behind, the horns of their sharp covering Vickers.

"This is why your blood brother has so little control over his people, Vickers," said Papago, tapping the short buckskin vest covering his bare chest. "Two taken over. It's for their own good. Four troops of dragoons in Prescott and more coming up as soon as the Department of Arizona can shift them. If the Indians don't realize now they'll be wiped out. The Navajos and Apaches are all ready. All we need are the Mogkion boys, and we'll have them as soon as the Snake Dancers are over. I tried to talk sense with Abeto, but he wouldn't listen. On his people drunk enough, and they'll listen.

There are half a thousand warriors in the seven parties of Tusayan, Vickers. What do you think your bloodless can do when I add them to my Apaches?"

Vickers was bent forward, his voice intense. "You've got the grip?"

Papago's eyes raised slightly. "Of course."

"You know, Papago, you're the Mogkion Kid? You've brought her here to this. We found your man House at Canyon Diablo." Vickers was trembling. "Don't try and deny it, Papago. What have you done with her? What have you done with Henry Korn?"

Papago parried his lips, something making coloring his voice. "I didn't know you felt that way about her, Vickers. She must be a beautiful woman."

"Papago—"

"Another! Abeto caught Vickers as he lunged forward at Papago. Then he turned to the half-breed. "Let him go, Papago. He has always been our friend. Here your friend. Take me in his place. Wherever you were going to do with him, do with me."

"No," said Papago, and lifted his hand off his cartridge belt to reason at his men, and they began slipping in and moving around from behind Papago and Combs, dark, and Apaches, the whites of their eyes shining in the small-noon. "No, Abeto. I tried to stop Vickers from this at the beginning, but he wouldn't listen. As you say, he has been our friend, and I don't want him scared up in it. But now he has come too far. Take him!"

This time he called to his men, and there was the abrupt scuffle of feet across the bed-quilted floor. Vickers took House of Abeto, trying to bring his Henry into line and keep down the lever all in one action. He saw Combs go for his cap and ball, whirled that way, already aware he would be too late, because the Indian's dragoon was free some before Vickers heard the metallic click of his cocked Henry. Then a white figure hurried in front of Vickers,

and the thunder of Combs' shot filled the small room. Vickers pulled his gun up in a jerky, frustrated way, all it was pointing at when Combs had been taken away by his other men. Stunned, Vickers watched the man in white double back to the door in front of him, and Combs was visible again, his cap and ball driving the soft flesh with a smother of acid black powder smoke. Ferry Papago stood to the other side, and he was looking at Abeto, startled now on the feet too. Then he lifted his eyes.

"You better drop it, Vickers. My Apaches got their charges loaded now. You haven't got a chance."

All around him, Vickers was aware of the Indians, standing with their moccasins trained on him. He dropped the Henry, both hands striking him, then the long barrel, and went to his knees beside Abeto. It was then he became aware of the Indian outside. The heavy blanket was torn aside and a Mogkion brave thrust into the room, followed by a pair of panache, white-headed dignitaries of Walpa governing body. They stopped when they saw Abeto, and other Mogkion crowding in from behind stumbled against the principals. Lifting his hand toward them, Vickers did not know what he was going to say, when he saw the man in white's head. It was Combs' cap and ball, still reeking of the black powder.

"Bahamas," said Papago, waving his hand toward Vickers, then heading the gun up. "You House Chief begged the Bahamas with one of your women."

"No," Vickers was surprised to hear Abeto's voice. He lifted the man's head higher, and Abeto shuddered in his arms, trying to get the words out. "No cannot... my blood brother cannot... have done... that," said the House Chief indignantly. "The Trust said this. He is the only one who ever befriended us. The Trust said this..."

Abeto sighed deeply, and his body was a sudden dead weight in Vickers' arms. Then the faint smell of

sweat and buckskin gazed Vickers, and rough arms were pulling him up off Abeto. He was still staring at the dead House Chief, a thin pale countenance inside him now. They had known a lot together. It was funny he should remember that time he had caught his hand between the bed and the plates of his first prize. He had wanted to cry then.

"You wanted to see the grip?" It was Papago's voice, entering Vickers' consciousness. "You'll see his bow, Vickers. You thought it was the Tusayan Machine? That's funny. I'm sorry it had to be this way, but you were on the wrong horse from the beginning. I guess, even about the Machine. We tried to stop you, didn't we? Other men had been sent out to find her, and I didn't go out of my way to stop them — I stopped them, but I didn't go out of my way. I wouldn't have taken them here in Prescott to stop them the way I did you. But I knew what a mistake it would be to let you get started, Vickers. I've already gotten into with Henry when I got word Korn had contacted you to meet him there in that man's shack outside Prescott. You almost made it anyway, didn't you? You came further than anyone else ever did. You're the only thing white man who knows the Mogkion Kid. You won't live long enough for it to do you any good, Vickers."

They were heading him roughly past Papago and the other Apaches now. The strange dead sensation of seeing Abeto dead had held it back, but now the full comprehension of what had happened struck Vickers, filling him with the first impulse to struggle after Papago threw his weight against the Apaches, managing to hold them momentarily, and turned enough to see Papago's Indian.

"Combs," he said, and perhaps it was the other lack of any violence, or emotion, in his voice which made the Indian's face pale slightly. "It'll kill you for that."

Somewhere outside the big medicine drums they called the fastest

had begun to land. Victoria knew what it meant. The smoke and Axtel's screams had indicated their secret lives in the cafe for eight days, fasting and praying themselves and now the tomb was hounding their readiness for the public dance. The floor was laid and rough beneath Victoria as he sat up. They had taken him to the eastern end of the mesa and thrown him into one of the ceremonial houses, a room dug out of the solid rock and roofed over about a foot above the level of the ground, a ladder leading down into it from above. There was an air hole in the roof, and his eyes had been sensationally themselves to the semi-darkness, and he realized there was someone else in here. At first it was only a dim, unrecognizable figure, standing against the wall on the far end. Then he saw it was a woman and realized she had been standing there like that, watching him ever since he had come in. And finally he recognized her.

It was like a physical blow. He felt his breath coming out suddenly between pressed lips. He had tried to prepare himself for it, all the way down his first knowledge of her, telling himself premeditated notions were always wrong. Yet no premeditated idea he had formed could match this, now. They had given her a white Crow skirt of buckskin to enable her to ride, and it only seemed to detract the tall, stoop-like line of her body. Her white moccasins added the pride! Her white hair, those hands had been smothered by dirt and torn by charcoal, but it still shone pale in the dark.

"Who are you?" she said finally. "Why do you stare at me like that?"

He realized he had no right to let it catch at him like that, with the grief of knowing Abbie was gone still so fresh. Yet, he could not help it, and he knew, somehow, that Abbie wouldn't mind. He was still gazing at her, hardly conscious of his actions as he joined the three wheeled of tribes from his legends.

"I had a handful of them," said the woman, seeing what he had.

"Several people know I possessed them. I tried to leave a trail. I thought, if they found them, somehow, they could follow me." She motioned with her hand. "You—"

"It got to be like I was following someone I'd known all my life," he said. Then he was leaning forward, her still on his knees, something in her crossing his line face. "It can happen, can't it? I mean, without ever having seen you, it can happen, to a man, that way."

Her bloom faded faintly beneath the dry breeze, and her eyes were still held to his. "What can happen? What way?"

"I wouldn't have believed it could happen," he said, grilling to his feet. "Not without knowing you. Not without even seeing you. I tried to tell myself I was a fool. At night I'd be there in my blankets and think about it and then laugh at myself, or try to. I couldn't really laugh, because I was wondering whether I believed it or not."

Suddenly, there seemed to be an affinity between them. Perhaps it was the way they were coming at each other, perhaps something less physical than that. Victoria saw a growing comprehension in the woman's eyes, and she bent forward slightly, searching for something in his face, her voice barely audible, as if she feared to break a spell.

"Believed what? What was happening?"

"It started so long ago," he said. "Do you think I'm crazy?" In French. "I guess, when the judge told you—"

"My father?"

He had hardly heard her. "I'd known of you before, of course, but only vaguely. The judge didn't tell me much. Just what you meant to him. Not even a description. But it must have started, even then. Later, it was more than that. Do you think I'm crazy? A man named Edwin. He told me some. Your people? It was like getting a glimpse of you through a window. Not touch. Not enough. Enough to want more. Then an Indian boy. He told me the way you rode. About your hair

it was the way he told me. They have a sensitivity to something like that no one else possesses. Just at that age. You know?"

She must have understood what he was trying to say, now. She tried to smile, and couldn't, staring at him, her eyes were soft and steady, and her brows were drawn together in a shadow, intense way, as if she was groping to define some emotion within her.

"I know," she said finally, almost whispering.

"After that, a chance," said Victoria. "An old man. Too old for anything like the boy. And yet, even then. Telling me about your eyes. And after I left him I wasn't even trying to laugh at myself. It can happen, can't it, that way? Do you think I'm crazy?"

She was still gazing at him, lost in it, like a child enraptured by a storyteller, and she motioned her lips, speaking almost dreamily. "No," she said, and drew a quick, soft little breath, as if faintly surprised at her own words. "No, I don't think you're crazy."

"Well," said a rough voice from the dark corner, "now that you've told the fair maiden of your wedding love, maybe you'd better let her know just who she got her."

Both the girl and Victoria stiffened, as if snatched from a dream. Then Victoria turned, to see the big bearded man in the long-sleeved red tunic sitting cross-legged against the far wall.

"Reverend," said Victoria quickly.

"Yeah, little old Red-eye himself," said Reeves. "I guess I should have waited for you to come with me and help sell that regalia, shouldn't I? These damn Apaches took my goods and dumped me in their calaboose. What was all that shouting to the shaman's disciples at Dinah?"

"I think you know," said Victoria. "Do I?" said Reeves slyly. "What happened to Fallon?"

"He got out the same way you did."

When Reeves spoke, the woman had turned toward the bearded man.

Now she was looking at Victoria again. "After Reeves said you were going to introduce yourself?"

"I'll do the honors," cried Reeves. "Jehony, this is Miss Cherry Korn. Miss Korn, meet Johnny Vickers."

All the blood seemed to drain from her face at that instant.

"Johnny Vickers," she said, and there was a looking at her voice. "Johnny Vickers," and she got it out the second time, pulling a handful of fringe from the pocket of her skirt, holding a veil in front of her face to see. "I was at the Butterfield station on Union Street when I heard the shot. It was just across the corner, right in front of the Courthouse. I was the first to reach him, and he was still alive. 'Get to Johnny Vickers!' he said, and this was in his hand—". Her fingers closed spasmodically and then opened as she drew it at Victoria, taking a step backward, her mouth twisting as she wiped her hand down her skirt. "Get to Johnny Vickers!" he said, and then he died."

Vickers held out his hand, something chiding him suddenly. "You think—"

"You know what I think," she said, the words torn from her in a hollow, bitter way. "Why do you suppose I'd come to the Prophet's Hall, sitting? Edgar James and I were going to be married the next day!"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DARKNESS trembled to the incessant rhythm of the tom-toms now, and beneath the hollow, muffled beat, the other sounds had begun, as the Mojaves and Navajos and Apaches gathered toward this end of the mesa for the dance. Victoria trembled in her seat, the white wall opposite her, looking neither at the bearded man nor Sherry Korn.

Sure there were things missing out of his friend's lifetime. Every man who were begin to the firing off at some time or another when he was out without any other kind of lucking to repair his saddle or to his duffle or a thousand other things

"No," Reeves' palms were spread out against the rock on either side of him as the Antelope Man let out another laughing snarl. "No, Vickers, you're the only one on trial, Papago's right, you're the only one on trial. Ain't no reason the rest of us have to dance with these snakes. I don't see any with paint smeared on their tails. They're real, Vickers. I seen a man hit by one of them diamond-backs last year. He swelled up like a balloon. Sweet was squeezing the grease in Reeves' face now, looking down into his beard. "Tell them I don't have to do it, Vickers. Make up some excuse. You can. You know them. Tell them I got a special chili from these Tums or whatever they are. I just come along. Tell them, Vickers."

The girl was standing there like that, and a faint line of red showed across her chin, and Vickers could see now how her teeth were clamped into her bottom lip, and the sight of Reeves' disgusted face suddenly he grabbed the girl's arm.

"Come on. You'll spoil it all if we wait until the Tums are used. We wouldn't act like this. They'll get suspicious, and I'll be over. You've got to trust Wilson."

"No!" Reeves tore from Vickers' grasp, a glared look in his eyes, pulling back against the rocks. "Move, Vickers, get me out of this. I'll do anything else. Man or devil. I've fought 'em all in my time. Bites or whips, black or yellow, man or beast. I fought a grizzly once. Don't let that bear on my chain! But not this, Vickers. You can't just walk in there and start playing with them diamond-backs. They'll have you twisted like a Quetzarop cactus in five minutes, please, Vickers. Anything. I'll do anything. Tell them, Vickers."

"What up?" Vickers stepped him across the flat, knocking his head back against the wall. The Indians were watching them now. "If you spit out last chance here I'll kill you myself. Now get up like a man and take it. I thought you were a man. Down at Canon Diablo I thought I hadn't ever seen that kind of nerve before."

"This ain't the same," Reeves was huddled back against the wall for lower lip stuck out and was. "Snakes, Vickers, snakes. I can't dance. There's something special about them. Anything else, Wilson. I told you. Anything else. Not snakes, Vickers. I seen a man hit. Anything but snakes. I didn't come for this."

"What did you come for then?" Vickers had both hands on his shirt, shaking him savagely. "What did you come for?"

"To get the girl. You know that. Get me out and I'll tell you. Get me out I'll do anything, Vickers."

Vickers shook him again. "It was you took the shot at me back in the shamans' episode at Canon Diablo."

"Yeah," Reeves wiped his sticky-looking mouth, struggling against Vickers' grip. "Yeah. I had to wait till you showed up from him where the girl was. I knew he wouldn't let right out. That sort of thing keeps when he said the Snake Dances was being held at Wupki. I knew. Still can't figure how I missed. You must have noticed. I placed you dead center before it got too dark. You must have moved."

Vickers shook him again as he started babbling again. "Who sent you? The Tucson Machine?"

"Yeah, yeah." He glanced sideways at the snakes again. "Get me out, Vickers, get me out. The Machine. I'll do anything. You promised. The Machine. Tusquig worked for us before. We got him to hook the girl so we'd have control over Judge Kern till the elections were over, and we were strong enough to keep the capital at Tucson. Only Papago switched sides on us and brought Sherry here for his own purpose."

"How did you get that handful of bribe from him?"

"Tusquig's apprentice, premier," Reeves breathed around like a crazed animal, hoarse, broken. "He cut a hand-off off when you were sleeping after a building edition. Edgar James had found out about this plot to get Sherry Kern, and had to be shamed."

I guess there's what James meant when he told Sherry you

name. You'd been claiming all along the Tucson Machine was back of all the trouble in the Territory, and James had always laughed at you. It was only then he knew you were right."

Sherry had turned toward them, a dazed comprehension seeping through the other snakes' twisting legs. "You seen Vickers. Didn't murder Edgar? Why should they try to implicate him at all?"

"I guess you haven't been in the Territory long enough to know how Vickers was fighting the Tucson Machine," said Reeves. "I guess you don't know how it is trying to get rid of a man like that."

"They tried it before?" Sherry's eyes still held doubt.

"I've got a scar in my shoulder for one time," said Vickers in a flat tone. "There's a dead fireman hanged out on Caliente Hill for another. I guess they got tired of delaying it that way. You was sort of a two-hands-with-one-stone deal, wasn't it?" He pointed Reeves back against the rock violently. "Who was it?"

Reever raised eyes rolled up to him. "When we knew James had to be killed, we paid your apprentice to cut a handful of frames off your knees. Everybody knew how you and James had hated each other. He even made it better by saying your name the last."

"Who was it?"

"The utter stupidity of Vickers' voice made Reeves stiffen. "Myself," he whispered, staring at Vickers. "We'd hired him. Other than Papago burned James down." Then he was staring past Vickers. "They're certain, Vickers, you promised. Get me out. Get me out. I ain't gonna dance with any snakes. For God's sake."

Vickers sensed the dancers moving in behind him, and he almost abandoned the flat, pushing Reeves against the wall. "What the hell chance in the Machine, Reeves? You rose the whole thing? You know. Tell me, tell me."

"No, Vickers, no!" Reeves began fighting with a sudden brutal force, screaming and twisting against the rock, tugging at Vickers' face, trying

to get out of his grasp. "Don't let them, Vickers. I ain't going to dance with no snakes. No, Vickers, no."

Vickers was torn aside from behind, and two Antelope Men caught Reeves, pulling him to his feet. Reeves was a big man, his face glaring him a violent strength, and he began forward with a series of lightning leaps. Another pair of Mesquites caught him, and the four dancers showed the shooting, fighting men out toward the snakes. When they were near the writhing mass of reptiles, they gave Reeves a last shove. He stumbled forward, unable to catch himself till too late. Already those of the snakes were coiled. The thump of the first one made, striking, was carried clearly to Vickers. Reeves' scream was hardly human. Kicking the snakes away, he whirled blindly, but another diamond-back whirled and struck. The big man perked with that hammer blow against his thick. He tore at the bullet head, whirling and howling in a frenzy of fear.

"Vickers, get me out. You promised, damn you, promised. Get me out. I ain't going to dance with no snakes. Vickers, Vickers, Vickers..."

The words ended in a cruel scream as another snake bit him. They were all about him now, heading and settling and coiling and he was this way and that, kicking wildly with his feet, roaring in a terrible fear. Vickers was held spellbound by the ghastly spectacle filled with a wild impulse to rush in and drag the man out of it, repelled by a growing horror at the snakes. Twice he made a desperate move toward Reeves, and the Antelope Man caught his arm. Sherry was watching with lurid eyes, brown ridges and fangs violently beneath his blouse.

"Vickers, please, Vickers, Vickers..." Reeves' shouts became weaker, and he made a last attempt to surge away from the snakes, arms held across his face, and another either struck him, almost knocking him over. He sank to his knees, his cries hoarse, painful, stinking and bloodstained. He tried to crawl, but he had his hands and knees. Another snake coiled before him, hissing, rattling. Reeves let out a last hoarse scream,

struck straight to his feet, turning wildly away. He staggered to his knees, falling down again.

He sunk on to his belly, his soft lightening become leaden, dully stopping, to be there, a great bulk of a man in his black and red garments, utterly still.

Two Antelope Men walked out to get him. A rattler struck at one of them, and he kicked the snake away easily, stooping to lift it. They carried him back past Vickens into the room from which they had come.

Vickens caught himself abruptly, moving over till Sherry was against his side, catching her cold hand. "You've got to break Fallon. It's our last chance, Sherry. It was the game got Heaven. Not the snake. A man doesn't die that fast from their bite. Maybe fear makes the venom work faster. I don't know. All I know is you can't let it get you like that. Fallon said he'd get us out. Do you hear me, Sherry?"

"I hear you, Vickens." Her voice was small, shaky. She was breathing fastest now and her fingers dug into his arm and the walls toward them. "There's trouble bound to burst from the nearby reefs."

In front of the head was a pit dug in the ground, supposed to represent Kib-gu-gu, the Black Lake of Texas, and the twenty men of the Antelope Society began circling this, shaking their guns. Then a large tomb on the rooftop nearly began to burst, and the men of the Snake Society came down from the sacred stairs at the north end of the court. The captain of the Snake Order, upon reaching the first snake, walked it with a feather as it started to coil, making it stretch out, then stretched it behind the head and put it between his teeth. A man of the Antelope Society placed his arms around the snake and a shudder, and together they moved in the peculiar halting way toward the sacred dance rock at the south end of the court. Each snake man in turn took his snake, and was joined by his Antelope partner. As the third pair left the last together, an Antelope Man emerged from the booth behind them, so close

that Vickens was sure he alone saw it, the Indian on the rooftop probably not even aware the men had high been there all the time, the dancer too busy with their snake to notice where he came from. There were seventeen of the Snake Order, and twenty of the Antelope, and when they had all paired off, it left three Antelope Men to gather up the snakes as each pair of dancers reached the sacred dance rock and came back, the Snake Man dropping his snake with a jerk of his head. The snakes were writhing and twisting near in the Moqueen's inside now, trying desperately to strike the Indians, all their leverage for striking disabled by the position in which they hung. The captain of the Snake Order had already rid himself of his first snake, and standing by the head with his partner, raised his ceremonial gourd at the whites, calling something.

"What did he say?" Sherry's voice was hoarse.

"He's ordering us to pick up a snake and dance with it in our mouth," said Vickens.

Suddenly the girl's body was shuddering violently. Her teeth showed while against her red lower lip, drawing blood and her voice shook with the terrible effort she was making to control herself.

"I can't do it," she said. "I can't. I can't."

"You've got to," said Vickens calmly. The Antelope man who had come from the booth was separating a big diamondback from three other reptiles on the courtyard floor. He reached in with both hands to grab the diamondback behind its head, with both hands before it could coil. Vickens was a smaller, narrower coil and strike, and saw the man flinch and grin his teeth.

Fallon moved in the inner room, Fallon moved toward them, holding the leading diamondback, two red dots on his right hand. Some was striking the black paint on his face.

"Take it," he told Sherry under his breath. "It's the one I feed Tule H."

Sherry clanked backward her hands out in front of her, but pale Vickens clamped his teeth shut and grabbed the snake in one hand behind the head, just beneath Fallon's grip, forcing it from him. He swung Sherry by the arm, pulling her violently to him, then caught her strands of black hair and held her head rigid, her body against him, and jammed the seven feet of leading serpent against her face. She screamed, and for that moment her face was twisted in utter horror. Then he felt her stiffen against him, and he gave her staring wide and suddenly drew her face into his, and it was as if she took the strength from him.

Her mouth opened, and he forced the snake between his teeth, and she bit into the thick diamond-backed hair and saw the two and had jerked into the air, the circle of paint Fallon had painted on its body near the rattler starting well. An Antelope Man put his arm around Sherry and guided her toward the dancing rock in that strange lumpy-hop.

Fallon had already chosen another marked snake for Vickens. Vickens did a moment of sick revulsion and closed his eyes as he took the snake from Fallon's hand, jamming it into his mouth. It tasted wet and cold and sticky all at once, and he almost gagged on it. The first area of a swelling Antelope Man was thrown around his shoulder, and they hopped toward the dance rock. The snake bent against him, sending waves of nausea through his whole body, and he knew an unprosperous dance to come.

But as he hurried the dancing rock with the shivering partner, he saw the real danger ahead of them. The snake which the other pair had dropped were slithering across the courtyard between the rock and the head—and though the three Antelope Men repeated to that job kept picking them up and putting them into the coiled-back booth, there were always some snakes left on the ground.

Sherry and the Antelope man who was dancing with her were alone; to

the head, when she dropped the snake from her mouth. It slithered away, and she tried to disengage herself from the Antelope Man. Vickens could see it now, and almost upon the man hopping with him as he tried to reach Sherry. One of the diamondbacks had freed itself from the writhing mass on the floor within the circle of dancers, slithering directly toward Sherry and her partner, and it had no paint drawn on its tail.

Vickens dropped his own snake, fighting fire of his partner, leaping toward her, as the diamondback reared up, and coiled Sherry around, scratching the face of her partner, but he caught her hand, ignoring the coiling snake to pull her toward the head and try another serpent. A sob escaped Vickens as he saw his world be too late. The diamondback's head disappeared in a blur of movement. Vickens shouted in a hoarse, cracked way, still running forward. Then he saw what had happened. Somehow, another Antelope Man had gotten in between Sherry and the snake in that last instant, and the serpent fell back from striking the mark leg.

"Fallon," gasped Vickens between his teeth, and suddenly understood what the man had meant back in the cave. "I'll see that they don't bite you."

Again the Moqueen made them take snakes to their mouths, and again it was Fallon who managed to be the one handling them the serpent, picking out the ones marked with the paint. This time Sherry took it herself. She was sobbing and her hands were shaking but she took the ugly reptile, making a choked sound as she forced it into her mouth, and started dashing toward the rock again. Fallon caught a snake for Vickens, started towards him. The man's face was turned muddy by sweat mixed with the black paint, and he fell against Vickens, gasping.

"We're doing it, we're doing it, if she can only hang on. One more time. Three times around, see—"

"Why?" Vickens asked him. "Why, Fallon?"

"My job, isn't it?" growled Fallon, shoving him. "I'm all right. Got hold of some of that so they call mah-cow-he. Antelope Man drink it to give him immunity. Kern said me out to get him, didn't he?"

"This isn't your job," said Vickers, fighting with the writhing snake in his hands. "A man wouldn't do this just for a job. You know what it means. You know that mah-cow-he wouldn't save you tomorrow. These Snake Man drink all these lines. They've been drinking that for eight days now. You know what it means. Why, Fallon?"

Fallon whirled to face him fully, those wide eyes meeting his, a little crazy now. "You know why! You came for the same thing. Even when I set you there in the Tortilla. It had already happened to you. Just hearing about her. I knew her, see. You just heard about her and it happened to you. I knew her. That's why!"

The tambos stopped. A hush fell over the throng on the walls, and the sweating dancers halted, dancing together in front of the hotel. The captain of the guitar band held up his stick, turning toward the four guests, then bowing to Vickers.

"Achto spoke the truth. No Pacheco has ever passed the ordeal before you. The Truce have sent you."

Vickers had a chance to speak with Fallon, grabbing his arm when they passed him going out. "You're coming with us. If you can't get away now, we'll wait for you below."

"Don't be a fool," said Fallon. "I can't leave till the dance is over. They'd suspect something."

"Fallon—"

"No!" The man jerked away, his face twisted. "This talk about through work is to me anyway. You know that. What's the use of risking your life for a dead man? I did this for her. You get her back, Promise me that!"

Vickers drew a heavy breath. "I promise you that."

"Show get the hell out of here!"

They gave Vickers his Henry back, and the man Fallon had taken at Canon Plaza, and another horse for Sherry. The Mesquero switched them past down the street, calm and silent, and Vickers could see how many of them were still drunk on Reyes' whiskey. He was probably holding Sherry up, and as they neared the start of the trail down, leading their horses, he felt her grow tent against him, and he saw it too.

They were strung out across the trail, a dozen or more, with their narrow, dusky faces and glittering eyes, and so Sherry, and Papago stood out in front of them. "You aren't taking the girl, Vickers. Hand her over and you can go."

"The taking her, Papago. You heard the decision of the principals. You'll be backing next time we if you try to stop it."

"The Mesquero won't interfere," said Papago. "You see how drunk they are. They'd just as soon see you dead as not, after the way you messed up their Snake Dance. Now hand her over."

"I won't stop with me," said Vickers. "There's all the Tucson Machine. Do you think Reyes will be the last man they and up here?"

"As a matter of fact," said Papago, "I do."

"You're dramatic," said Vickers.

"No," said Papago. "You wanted to know who sat the top saddle in the Tucson Machine? A strong man, Vickers. The kind of man who could go out and do something himself when his men failed."

The implication of that surprised Vickers enough to take him off-guard, and his incredulity was in his voice. "Are you trying to say that Reyes—"

"Was the head of the Tucson Machine. He'd sent half a dozen of his men out to find the girl before he finally got impatient, and came himself. He was that kind, Vickers. Almost as dangerous as you. And now that he's gone, Kern won't have much trouble shifting the caped back to Percoch and smashing the

Machine for good." Papago shifted impatiently. "The through talking, done through about and well let you be a shrewder tip."

"You're bluffing, Papago," said Vickers. "You don't dare defy the odds of the principals if you want them to help you against the troops. We're coming through."

He put one hand behind Sherry's back, raising her forward, but with his fist over Papago's wrist for his gun. "This is how we're bluffing, Vickers."

Vickers had not really believed they would try it, here. He could have brought his own Henry up and cocked it about the same time Papago got the Remington out, but that would have left Sherry in the line of fire.

With a grunt, he threw himself against the girl, not even trying for his own gun, and the two of them went down, rolling into the dark doorway of the adobe house on this side, the roar of gunfire echoing down the street as Papago and the Apaches opened up.

The wall cut him off from most of the Apaches, but he could still see two of them out there. He stopped the driver on his Henry, and it halted in his hand, and one Apache yelped and doubled over, dropping his Sherry. A few volleys of gunfire rocked the narrow way, and bullets made their deadly thud into the mud with all about Vickers. But there were only one or two Apaches beside Papago with six-shooters, and the others had those old snake-shot Sherrys. The sudden cessation of gun- and told him they had emptied their guns and had to take that moment for reloading, and he knew it would be his only chance.

"There's only one way to finish this," he muttered.

"Papago?" said Sherry.

He turned to see her face, pale and drawn in the dark, starting to lean Indian as the girl, Sherry. Get their leader and all the men with go out of them."

"Vickers, you can't go out there."

"I can't go out there."

"I can't go out there."

"I can," said Vickers. "While they're busy with me, you get out of here and back down the street to the principals. They'll keep their word about killing you go."

"Vickers—"

But he was already throwing himself out the door with his Henry held across his belly, an adrenaline cast to his face, burned face, his mouth twisting as he saw the first Apache shaking down the wall across the street, and fired. The man jerked against the wall, still trying to join a fresh load down his Sherry, then fell forward on to his feet. A figure leaped on the roof of the first level across the street, and Vickers realized they had been trying to come up on him inside the house and way. The man had a six-gun and began firing wildly, with both hands, and only then did Vickers recognize him. The Henry made his single hollow boom.

"I told you, Gonzalez, I told you," shouted Vickers, still going forward down the street, as Gonzalez pitched head forward off the roof, and then Vickers' eyes swung to the man further down in the middle of the street. He had been trying to work down next to the wall while Vickers was under, but as soon as Vickers showed, he had moved into the center. It was some distance, and Papago did not fire as most Indians would have. He moved toward Vickers without increasing his speed, but forward a little. Vickers was still gaining from firing at Gonzalez, and he stopped the lever home hard and the man backed him against his belly. Papago did not jerk, and Vickers knew he had missed. Then Papago's Remington spoke.

Vickers had been shot before, and the Ramirez blow against his leg was no new sensation. The street seemed to drop from beneath him, and he found himself on his belly with the Henry pressed under his body, a terrible swimming pain robbing him of all volition. Through a haze he saw Papago still coming forward, firing up the gun for another shot. Then it was Vickers' voice.

"Victims!"

Something inside him grew hot and hard and clear. He pulled the gun upward till the barrel lay against his chin, snapping the cylinder out sideways beneath him. Papago saw it and tried to stop him, firing sooner than he had intended. The hard earth kicked up in a puff of sand, blinding dust before Victor's eyes. He squeezed the trigger that way.

When the dust fell and the stinging force of the bullet striking earth so near to Victor's left hip, he could see Papago lying on his belly down the street. The Apaches were already beginning to gather about

their leader, forgetting Victor. One of them had a surprised look on his face. Then it was Sherry's hands on Victor, soft, cool, steady, lifting him up. The pain in his leg made him dizzy.

"Help me on the road," he said between gritted teeth. "We've got to get out. No all over now."

She helped him up against the horse, her arms around his body. "In a way we over, Victor, but in a way it's just begun," she said. "I told you I didn't think you were crazy, back in that room. You were right. It can happen, that way, to a man." And her eyes were soft and steady, meeting his. "Or a woman."

THE END

His enemies wore gaudy uniforms. But like Eisenhower can tell you that's not what puts your name on a mountain.

MEN IN BUCKSKIN

By Brett Austin

THE AMERICANS in California in 1845 had long suffered under strict Mexican rule. They wanted their adopted land to break with the Mexican government and become an independent state. But eight hundred Mexican soldiers, under the leadership of General Castro, were stationed at Yerba Buena, now known as San Francisco. Their motto was, "We will kill every American in California."

When John C. Fremont heard of this, he called his men together. They were hardy men—members of the buckskin tribes who settled the West—but he had few of them. Despite their small numbers they went against General, a strong Mexican fortress, and took it in bloody fighting. Then, daringly, they moved against General Castro's Mexican troops at Yerba Buena and drove them from their fort.

General Castro was surprised. A handful of Americans, wearing buckskin, carrying long rifles, had defeated his best troops. He ordered a retreat. For six days, Fremont and his men followed the fleeing Mexicans, driving them into Baja California, Mexico. The Golden State was free to choose its own rule.

"Well," said John Fremont, "they didn't underestimate me."

John Fremont was not a big man. His shoulders were wide, his body wiry—and a strong will guided destiny.

He was born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1812. Little is known about his boyhood. But, by the time he was twenty-six, he was a Lieutenant in the United States Army. He had a dry sense of humor and he liked a good joke.

Soon after he became a Lieutenant, the movement inside him the need of an exploring expedition sent out to find a good route to California. He went up the Platte River, followed the north fork of the Platte to Fort Laramie. There he ran into Indians.

This was the country of the Gros Ventres, the Sioux, and the Cheyennes. They were on the warpath. Fremont and his men had a little trouble—a few Indians were killed—but they went through without personal loss. They reached the summit of the Rockies and Fremont, seeing a peak, climbed the highest point of the great mountain range—13,990 feet above sea level. Today, this peak is known as Fremont Peak.

Although many other explorers—Jim Schuyler among them—claim to have discovered Great Salt Lake, the official recognition as the inland lake's founder goes to John Fremont. He and his party are credited with being the first white men to spend a night beside its salt-laden waters.

That winter, he and his party were snowed in on the High Sierras. For two weeks they struggled with ice and snow and blizzards, eating six thousand feet above sea level. Men froze to death, and were used for meat. Men suffered from frozen ears despite their combs and minked skin caps. Frost-bitten cheeks turned black and pecked. Their Indian guides, understanding that they intended to cross the Sierras in the dead of winter, deserted them. But finally they reached the American Fork of the Sacramento River, and on March 6 they arrived at Sutter's Fort.

They were the first white men to cross the Sierra Nevada.

John C. Fremont, the Pathfinder,

had the distinction of being the first to do many things. In addition to being the first to use Salt Lake, to cross the Sierras, he was also the first Republican candidate for president of the United States. This was in the campaign of 1860. He was defeated by James Buchanan.

"Maybe there was just as well, for Fremont was no politician. He was a man of the plains, the mountains; a man on horseback. No doubt. Had he been elected, he would have served his country faithfully and well. But the political evil, the endless non-stop of days spent between four walls and under a roof, would have been too much for any the least.

Kit Carson was one of his best friends. Carson guided for Fremont, and there was a great bond between the guide and explorer. Carson was with him when they first saw Great Salt Lake. That winter Carson returned to Taos, New Mexico, where he bought a sheep ranch. The next spring, word came to him that Fremont wanted him to guide for him again.

Cannon sold his sheep ranch at a great loss and hurried to Bent's fort where he met Fremont. At the time, Fremont had forty men with him. These forty men freed California from Mexican domination.

After he had driven the Mexicans from California, he was military governor of that territory. Later, he was chosen civil governor. For a

while, in 1961, he was in command of the western U.S. Air Force.

With Bill Hickok, that fearless son of the plains, became a great friend of Fremont when war came in 1861. Fremont, by then a general, was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, wanted Bill Hill, already grown up as a great leader and gunfighter, to be brigade wagon-master of Fremont's men, who were going to move against the Confederates.

"You tell John Fremont," said Wild Bill, looking up at the mounted soldier who had brought him the request, "that I'll be right into his camp but a week before you."

Wild Bill, then in his prime, was six-foot one. His long hair fell on ringlets over his powerful shoulders. John Fremont and he went through some tough battles in the war to follow. Once, while chasing a train of provisions between Fort Leavenworth and Sedalia, Missouri, a swarm of guerrillas fell on them. Quite a fight followed. Finally, the troops drove the robbers off, saving the supplies.

"How many did you kill, Wild Bill?" asked General Prentiss.

Wild Hall smiled. "Enough," he admitted.

Freeman was governor of the territory of Arizona from 1878 to 1881. He was appointed a major-general in 1882 and served on the regiment last.

He died that same year. Death ended his career. The man in buckskins would be lost to his native place.

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